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ABSTRACT

If principals are responsible for implementing educational reforms, then criteria for effective leadership skills should be developed. This paper considers criteria for identifying effective principals and proposes a training and appraisal system. The paper discusses five domains that identify effective principals: (1) vision, (2) organization/collaboration, (3) people skills, (4) communication skills, and (5) hardiness. Vision implies that the principal sees the school realistically and in terms of improvement. Collaborative organization and leadership depend upon the "unit" of principal and teachers. People skills concern the ability to manage people--principals must be expert at working with diverse groups and individuals. Effective communication communicates not only information but also trust and understanding. Principals must also know whether oral or written communication is more effective in a given situation. The quality of "hardiness" involves a stress-resistant attitude; such leaders are open to change, feel involved, and sense control over events. The proposed Administrator Improvement Model (AIM) is instructionally designed to develop effective leadership skills. Training involves classroom activities, role-playing situations, and self- and peer evaluation/coaching. Workshops focus on the five identified effectiveness domains. The attitudes identified in the model encourage self, staff, and community to achieve goals through group problem solving. The model proposes that principals can transfer learned skills and attitudes related to effective leadership into making their jobs easier, more productive, and more rewarding. Three charts illustrating the model are appended. (CJH)

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AIMing FOR ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE APPRAISING PRINCIPALS: A PROPOSED MODEL

by

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AIMing For Administrative Excellence; Appraising Principals

A Proposed Model

The controversy surrounding educational reform in Texas has continued to flourish since the passage of House Bill 72 in 1984. This recent legislation has had a major impact on students and teachers. Students have had to contend with higher passing standards, limited participation in extra-curricular activities, more credits for graduation from high school, excused and unexcused absence regulations, and other stringent requirements mandated by law. Teachers have been tested to insure presence of basic skills, are facing the implementation of a strict state-mandated appraisal system, and have been forced to compete with one another for merit pay. A third group who is directly responsible for the implementation of the legislative requirements is the public school principals. Not only is the principal directly responsible for implementation of mandated reform but also must become the change agent in instructional improvement. Additionally, principals are to be appraised on their ability to implement the changes required by law and at the same time on their ability to lead, to manage, to make decisions, to appraise teachers, to be instructional leaders.

While we in education have spent much time uncovering the cause/effect relationships in teaching and learning and working with teachers to cause student achievement to increase, we may not have transferred this process to developing the skills of principals necessary for effective change and reform. If the principal is truly the change agent, as

noted by most authorities, then we must not neglect our role in developing essential leadership skills during this critical reform era. A necessary task, consequently, is the identification of essential leadership skills to be used as criteria for appraising and improving the effectiveness of principals. The purpose of this article is two-fold: (1) to consider criteria for appraising and identifying effective public school principals and (2) to describe a proposed training and appraisal system for principals and other mid-managers.

Domains for Appraisal

There are five domains to be considered when identifying effective principals: (1) vision, (2) organization/collaboration, (3) people skills, (4) communication skills, and (5) hardiness. Each of these domains is critical to successful leadership.

Vision. Of primary importance, the principal must have vision. In a recent conversation with a principal concerning technology, the principal said: "People want guarantees, but I envision what schools of tomorrow will be like and must strive to reach our goals." How true. The principal must have a vision of what his/her school should be and work to achieve that goal. Vision implies, then, that the principal sees the school not only as it is but also as it should be. With such vision, the principal is then guided to reach goals, motivate staff, inspire, strengthen, and create to guide the school toward excellence. This mode of thinking also implies that the effective principal, (using daily interaction to gather information and monitor events) is "proactive." Furthermore, the principal understands change. The

leader works on getting things done by working through established networks to implement programs and growth. As the principal works toward alignment of the school's purposes, the leader's actions are centered around the priorities of this focus, and the leader puts in extraordinary time to achieve success.[1]

Organization/Collaboration. Effective principals have skills of organization and planning that lead to effective articulation of plans and goals by all individuals in the organization. Isn't the job of leadership too heavy for principals alone? Programs in the schools that work and that best affect student achievement are those that successfully involve collaborative approaches.

Organization and leadership from a collaborative approach depends upon focusing on the most important unit in the school: the principal and the teachers. The collaborative principal allows more flexibility toward goal attainment and develops a skill in leading others through a team approach to problem-solving, planning implementation, and evaluation. While the principal holds to the vision, he/she has sensitivity, understanding, and consideration to all involved and allows each to participate in and be "owners" in the decision-making process. The leader also holds fast to the belief that clearer, more thorough decision-making processes lead to better decisions. The studies identified within the book, In Search of Excellence,[2] support these basic principles of organization, problem-solving, and planning. If we look at each of the eight elements identified within the book about leaders

who function effectively and apply those to the effective principal, we see how collaboration/organizational approaches may be utilized:

1. "A bias for action" -- the effective principal will take action;

2. "Close to the customer" -- the effective principal listens, takes advise, and responds to students and parents;

3. "Autonomy and Entrepreneurship" -- the effective principal treats rewards and recognizes personal leadership and self initiative;

4. "Productivity through People" -- the effective principal treats teachers as adults and provides opportunity for participation and action and rewards for success;

5. "Hands on, Value Driven" -- the effective principal selects a few values and stresses them throughout the organization. Based on these values, the school selects one or two goals for the year and works together toward achieving those goals;

6. "Sticks to the Knitting" -- the effective principal concentrates the efforts of the school on the purpose of the school, that is, student achievement;

7. "Simple Form, Lean Staff" -- the effective principal simplifies tasks asked of teachers and allows for staff members to have easy access to them;

8. "Simultaneous Loose-tight Properties" -- the effective principal encourages decision making at all levels: maintenance and cafeteria workers, teachers, educational aides, and secretaries.[3]

People Skills. As with organization and collaboration approaches to problem solving, effective principals have to be expert at working with various groups of people as well as individuals. Because school districts are composed of individuals and multiple interest groups that have unclear and competing goals, diffuse sources of power, and ambiguous lines of authority, principals must have the necessary skills

involved to successfully manage these various groups.[4] This success may be accomplished through several people management methods such as soliciting cooperation, collegial supervision, and having the ability to manipulate by arranging, delegating, discriminating, and enhancing.[5]

The management of people, then, becomes, as Sergiovanni states, an additional ingredient in successful leadership. For example, administrators, particularly principals, have found that in today's society the use of direct authority to obtain compliance is less than useful. Instead, voluntary cooperation among the interest groups (parents, students, and teachers), as with collaboration, helps establish the mutually favorable relationship which is so necessary in attaining goals. Additionally, Costa has determined that a cooperative environment among the interest groups may also contribute to the creation of intellectually stimulating school conditions which promote student achievement.[6]

Techniques or skills which promote a cooperative environment will in turn support the needs of various interest groups. One such technique may be applied through the decision-making process. Involvement of parents, teachers, and students in the process allows each group to participate in decisions which effect them. Decisions in the areas of goal development, selection of instructional materials, discipline management plans, and suggestions for problem solving are among those which may be shared by the various interest groups.

Another effective technique of managing people is through the use of collegial supervision rather than evaluative supervision. The

use of the latter technique which is more subjective and judgmental tends to inhibit creativity among staff members. Unfortunately, in Texas, collegial supervision, in which principals work with teachers has been discouraged tremendously with the passage of the reform laws. The principal has now been placed in the role of "evaluator" which has narrowed considerably the freedom of creativity, the main thrust of collegial supervision.

Other skills such as arranging, delegating, discriminating, and enhancing are also considered to be people skills because in these areas, the principal always considers first the individual involved. The principal must understand the uniqueness of his/her individual staff members and "arrange" people in such a way as to cause them to work openly and effectively by utilizing their unique talents. As a delegator, the principal knows the strengths and weaknesses of each staff member and delegates responsibility accordingly. At the same time, the principal "enhances" the potential of each staff member and causes them to succeed by assigning responsibilities with which the staff member may be successful, and as a result, motivated to grow and become more successful.

As a manipulator, then, of groups of people and the various individuals within the group, the principal needs to be aware of all the techniques and skills aforementioned. Many times the success of the principal is dependent upon his/her ability to understand the concepts of leadership which emphasize cooperation, collegial supervision, and manipulation. Let us keep in mind, however, the most obvious advantage

these techniques and skills may lend themselves to is a cooperative environment which may increase student success. Feelings of being successful may, in turn, motivate the various interest groups representing the parents, the teachers, as well as the students.

Communication. That principals have a good understanding of the communication process is essential. Oral and written communication is used extensively by the principal. It is considered one of the most important parts of the job of being a public school principal. Effective communicators communicate trust and understanding.

Communication has been studied for centuries. Men have made philosophy and written books about it; they have formulated rules of behavior and developed methods of instruction. More recently, theories of communicative behavior, some of which are simplistic, have been formulated through tools of research. In spite of this, we are only beginning to realize how important communication is to our existence, and we realize there are only two basic methods of communication.

The principal needs to decide which form of communication, oral or written, will be utilized more effectively in a given situation. He needs to function as a communicator and make communication decisions based on knowledge, intuition, and his/her own school/community situation.[7]

The ability to understand a simplistic oral communication model may create understanding between the school and community, the parent and teacher, and the student and teacher. Knowledge of how to send

a message, receive a message, decide what to say, convey the message and practice control are valuable assets to a principal in highly communicative and complex world.

Additional knowledge of the effective design of written communication such as letters, notes home, newsletters, and bulletins, can benefit the principal by establishing positive public relations as well as providing pertinent information to the students, teachers, and parents.

Communication, though a complex process, if done correctly, is one important aspect of being an effective principal. Without the tools of effective communication, the principal may find his job to be more difficult.

Hardiness. Due to the stress related to school administration and the need for us to develop "wellness" skills in leaders, hardiness becomes a major component of leadership. A psychological stress-resistant attitude toward life, leaders need to look at change as a challenge - that educational reform is not a burden but an opportunity, that the classroom of tomorrow will be drastically different from the classroom of today, and we have an opportunity - the challenge - to develop tomorrow's classroom now. The second "C" commitment leads to successful leadership. Through strong commitment leaders alter their actions to see that the "jobs" are done and done well. Leaders are committed - engaged. Leaders who rated high on commitment took active

roles in their family lives and in their job and believed their activities to be interesting and important. Finally, this engagement also resulted in healthy executives feeling they had an impact on their surroundings - they controlled activities in their own lives. Since an attitude toward life affects the health of principals and since these attitudes and outlooks are learned through experiences, with proper training and awareness, leaders can alter their outlook and be healthier, happier administrators.

In addition to research done on the "Type A" personality and its relationship to coronaries and hypertension, research is being conducted into the personality type that is resistant to stress. Psychologists began looking at personalities who work long hours, who have high-powered stressful jobs but do not become ill. After two years of research, dozens of studies have shown that despite the increased risk, illness is not inevitable. Suzanne C. Kobara and Sabiatore R. Maddi, of the University of Chicago, have identified three characteristics that can be related to a variable they call hardiness.[8] Leaders who are hardy are: open to change, feel involved in what they are doing and sense they are in control over events in their lives. Hardy leaders score high on the three C's: Challenge (change is a challenge not a threat), commitment, and control. These three C's seem to have a profound affect on the health and well being of individuals.

Proposed Administrator Improvement Model

We all too often speak of leadership and instructional leadership as if by saying the words we all have understanding of what they mean. Until recently, educators could say, as they said about teaching, that leaders are born; they have certain mystical qualities.

When speaking of reform, search for excellence, effectiveness of schools, and quality principals, we have been forced to take a long look at leadership and identify those qualities and skills that cause growth and change in the organization. In developing a model to assist principals in being more effective, we must accept a certain philosophy:

1. certain identifiable skills, knowledge and attitudes can be identified, described, and labeled that cause leaders to be more effective;
2. these skills can be learned in a formal classroom setting;
3. once learned, these skills, if applied accurately, can affect actions and results;
4. these skills are more effective if performed in a consciously and with intent.

The model proposed, Administrator Improvement Model (AIM), is an instructional model designed to develop and strengthen leadership skills of principals to make them more effective and efficient. The model is based on the philosophy that identification of skills, techniques, and attitudes, classroom activities, coupled with designed role playing situations, and self and peer evaluation and coaching can help develop those essential leadership skills (see Figure 1).

The body of knowledge, the curriculum of the model, will focus on the domains previously described. Workshop sessions are being developed which will address vision, organization/collaboration, people skills, communication, and hardiness. Included within these workshops will be topics on the application of effective school studies, quality circles for educators, communication theory, articulation, effective workshop presentation, social trends, differentiated learning styles, appraisal training, leadership styles, among others.

The skills will be developed through role playing, simulations, case studies, research analysis, guided practice, peer coaching, group discussions, group dynamics, and other decision-making processes. Additional development will include goal setting, evaluating outcomes, leading meetings, establishing curriculum priorities, and dealing with conflicts.

The attitudes identified in the modules are those that affect leadership, appropriate attitudes toward roles of self, staff, community shaping and achieving goals, vision of school, sensitivity toward group problem solving, and community attitudes.

We are making novel strides and are totally committed to our faith. We are educators and teachers always. Through AIM we believe that with conscious and skillful application of knowledge, skills, attitudes related to effective leadership, principals can transfer what they have learned to making their jobs easier, more productive, and more rewarding.

[1]Gene Hall, William L. Rutherford, Shirley M. Hord, and Leslie L. Huling, "Effects of Three Principal Styles on School Improvement," Educational Leadership, February 1984, pp. 22-29; William L. Rutherford, "School Principals as Effective Leaders," Kappan 67 (1985), p. 31; Thomas J. Sergiovanni, "Leadership and Excellence in Schooling," Educational Leadership, February 1984, p. 4; and David A. Squires, William G. Huitt, and John K. Segars, Effective Schools and Classrooms (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1984), passim.

[2]Thomas J. Peters, and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., "In Search of Excellence", Harper and Rowe, November 1982.

[3]Thomas Owens, "A Framework for Improving Excellence in Education," The School Administrator, passim.

[4]Thomas J. Sergiovanni, "Ten Principles of Quality Leadership," in Readings in Educational Supervision, eds. Edith E. Grimsley and Ray E. Bruce (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1982), p. 19-22.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Arthur L. Costa, "The Principal's Role in Enhancing Thinking Skills," Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking, (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1985), pp. 29-32.

[7]Gerald M. Phillips, David E. Butt, and Nancy J. Metzger, Communication in Education: A Rhetoric of Schooling and Learning, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), passim.

[8]Maya Pimes, "Psychological Hardiness, The Role of Challenge in Health," Psychology Today, December 1985, pp. 34-98.

ADMINISTRATOR IMPROVEMENT MODEL:

THE AIM SYSTEM

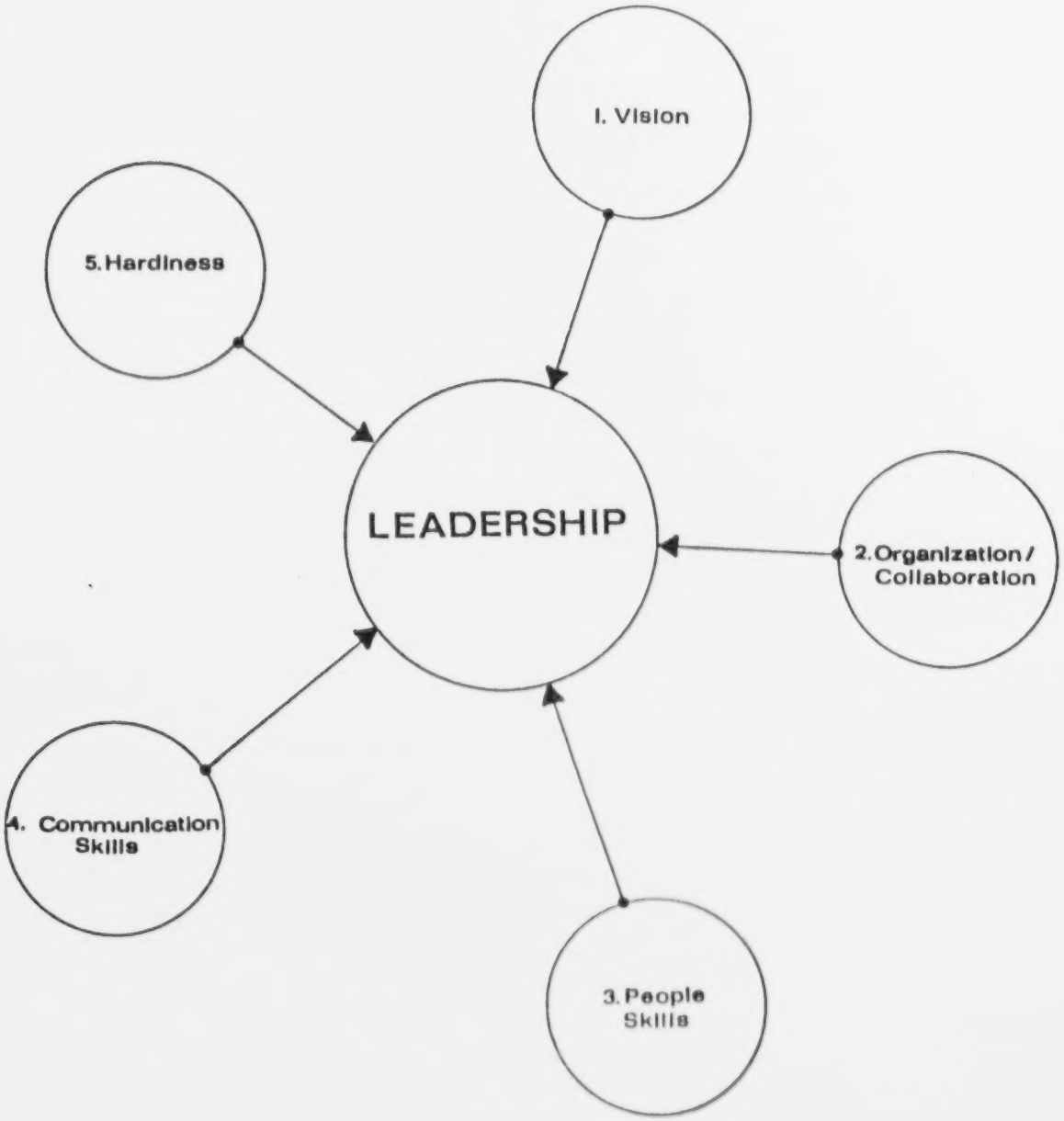
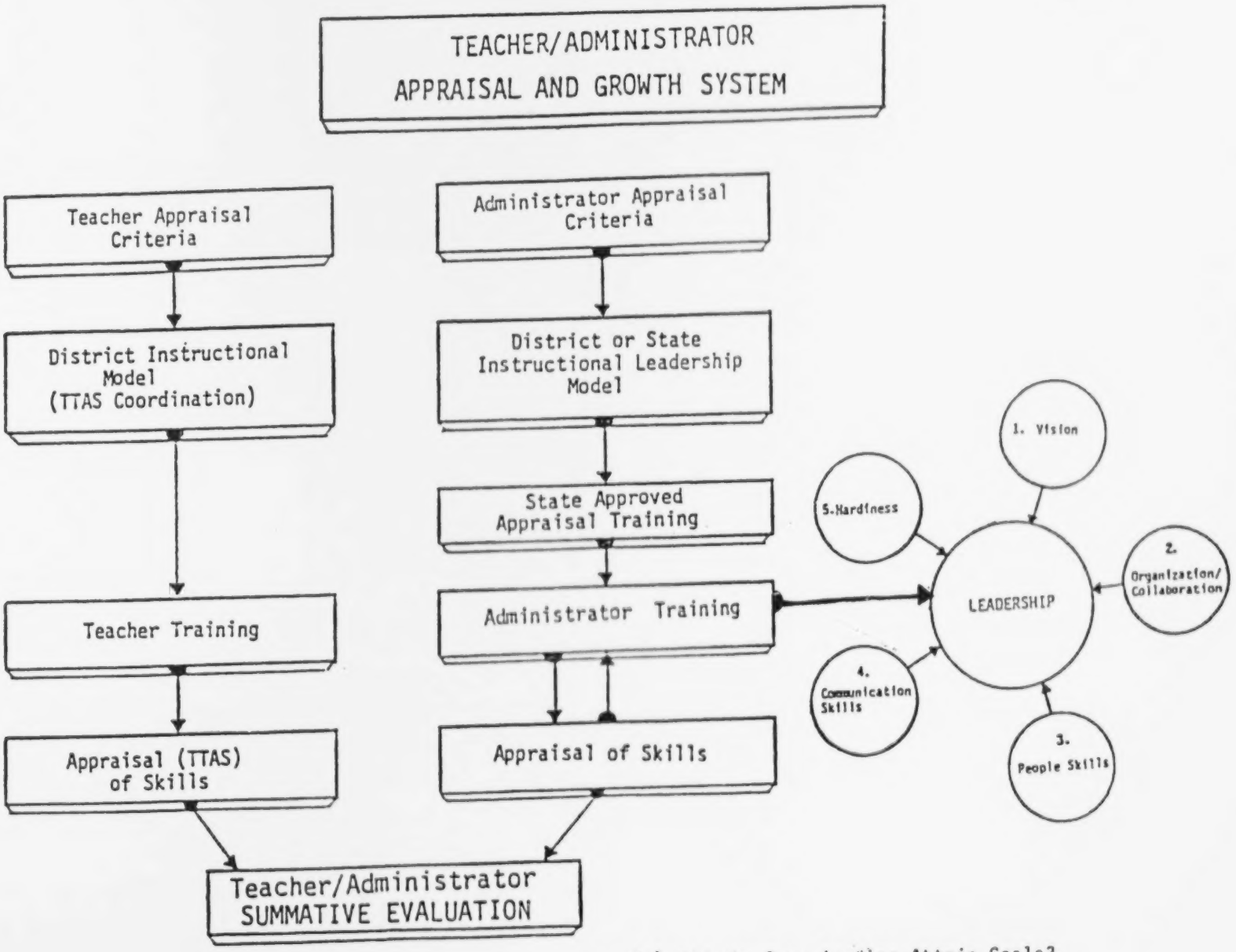


Figure 1



1.) Did Instruction Improve?
2.) Did Student Achievement Increase?

1.) Did the Organization Attain Goals?
2.) Did Achievement Increase?
3.) Did Teacher's Instruction Improve?
4.) Did Leadership Skills Improve?

APPENDIX I

I. Vision. Effective administrative leaders:

A. Set goals; determine a platform

B. Are patriotic to the organization

C. Establish a positive school climate

D. Establish an academic focus within their areas of responsibility

E. Provide collegial supervision

F. Explicate the dream; model for others

G. Communicate expectations; demand results

H. Focus on future and present trends

I. Constantly scan, monitor, and interpret

J. Have integrity

II. Organization/Collaboration. Effective Administrative leaders:

A. Set long range and short range objectives

B. Distingquish organizational skills utilized with problems big and small

C. Consider effective instruction and objective in school operation

D. Consider planning to be an essential part of the organizational structure

E. Organize into a platform

F. Rely on intuition in decision-making

G. Can teach

H. Are familiar with common leadership theory

I. Can make decisions and defend those decisions

J. Manage administrative teams

III. People Skills. Effective Administrative leaders:

A. Understand the reasons for the use of politics; managing symbols

B. Establish effective school/community relations

C. Are adaptable and voluntarily change

D. Solicit voluntary cooperation when solving problems

E. Make decisions and effectively communicate the purpose to subordinates

F. Exhibit and model exemplary personal behaviors by utilizing listening skills.

G. Makes each member of the organization feel important

H. Reinforce productive employee behavior

I. Apply the principles of motivation theory, especially intrinsic reward

J. Apply appraisal skills fairly and equitabally

K. Share leadership; disperse leadership

L. Model school climate

M. Develops positive models

IV. Communication. Effective Administrative leaders:

A. Communicate effectively; orally, written

B. Consider effective communication an essential part of the job

C. Understand and apply the principles of communication theroy

D. Has knowledge of group process

V. Hardiness. Effective Administrative leaders: